



NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA



**CENTRE FOR  
CHILD RIGHTS**

# THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



August – September 2025

# Preface

We are delighted to present the current edition of our bi-monthly newsletter, continuing our mission to spotlight child rights, share critical insights, and highlight our ongoing research, advocacy, and outreach efforts. This issue covers key legal and policy updates, landmark judicial decisions, international discussions on child protection, and significant observances dedicated to children's welfare.

With each edition, we strive to foster dialogue and action on issues that impact children the most. Your engagement and feedback are invaluable in shaping this initiative and strengthening our collective commitment to child rights.

We look forward to your thoughts and collaboration as we work towards a world where every child's rights are protected and upheld.

# Disclaimer & Acknowledgement

The Centre for Child Rights (CCR) expresses its heartfelt gratitude to the National Law University Odisha (NLUO) for providing a platform to think critically and engage meaningfully with the realm of Child Rights. This endeavour would not have been possible without the unwavering support of Prof. Ved Kumari (Vice-Chancellor of NLUO), Patron-in-Chief, and Prof. Rangin Pallav Tripathy (Registrar of NLUO). Prof. Biraj Swain (Chief Minister's Chair Professor- Child Rights and Director of Centre for Child Rights, NLUO) has been instrumental in shaping this vision from its inception, and her invaluable guidance has played a pivotal role in bringing this Newsletter to fruition.

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# About Centre for Child Rights

Centre for Child Rights (CCR) is the specialized research centre of the National Law University Odisha, Cuttack (NLUO). The Centre was founded on April 12, 2015 with ceremonial inauguration by Hon'ble Justice Dipak Misra, former Chief Justice of India and Visitor, NLUO in the august presence of the Hon'ble Chief Justice and Judges of Orissa High Court, and Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Odisha. The Centre aims at building a rights temper amongst the children and the society, strengthening law and justice for children and child wellbeing by supporting and initiating research, policy advocacy and community action on children's issues. The Centre aims to provide integrated support and consultancy to different layers of institutional governance for protection and insurance of child rights, child protection, understand and reform enabling and disabling factors to furthering child rights and the inter-sectionalities.

Headlined by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ved Kumari, one of the foremost chroniclers of Juvenile Justice and everything Child Rights in the world, NLUO got its first ever Chair Professorship on Child Rights with a five-member staff team sanctioned by the Hon'ble CM of Odisha in 2023. This is led by the Chief Minister Chair Professor. This is the only fully functional chair professorship on child rights in the universe of National Law Universities across India.

# ODISHA TO CONDUCT SECOND SURVEY OF ORPHANED AND SINGLE-PARENT CHILDREN

SHEHNAZ N. CHOWDHURY



The Odisha Government in a bold move, to strengthen its commitment towards the vulnerable children of the state, declares a second state-level survey of single-parent and orphan children. This is a follow-up to the first survey conducted in 2019 that reported close to 2.5 lakh such children in the state.

The new survey, initiated by the Women and Child Development Department, is not just about counting but also about ensuring that every indigent adolescent is heard. Anganwadi workers conducted door-to-door surveys between July 11 and July 21, 2025, under the supervision of district officials. The information will be later verified and compiled, and the final reports will be submitted by September 4, 2025.

The distinguishing feature of this exercise is precision and attention to details. The organization of a specialized survey team in each district, training of several field staff, and strict review mechanism contribute to the credibility of the results. The results will facilitate the inclusion of children in a number of welfare programs focussing on education, nutrition, and psycho-social care like JASHODA and Ashirbad, thereby establishing a safety net for the often-neglected ones.

The urgency of this project has increased in the aftermath of COVID-19, when numerous children in Odisha had lost one or both

parents. In this sense, this survey transcends strict statistical analysis and is an expression of empathy, intended to bring vulnerable children into an embrace of protection and growth opportunities.

In a country that boasts of its community-based welfare policies, this new focus on its youngest and most vulnerable members is a strong reminder that good governance is achieved when it reaches its most vulnerable citizens.



# BEHIND BARS AND BEYOND HELP: INDIA'S JUVENILE JUSTICE CRISIS

AMIT SAMAL



India has a failing justice machinery for its children, claims Justice Madan B. Lokur, former Supreme Court judge, in a powerful commentary co-authored with advocate Raagini Raghu. Though there is an array of laws in India that are quite progressive on protecting child rights, access to justice is deeply discriminatory and inadequate, affecting most children in rural areas, marginalised communities, or conflict-affected zones.

Cities have witnessed a transformation with legal aid schemes and special courts, but in rural India, children are often left to fend for themselves through some form of makeshift dispute resolution, like village panchayats. Then there is legal aid, which is, in principle, skewed towards children in conflict with the law instead of victims of crime. These legal aid lawyers are mostly ill-informed about the subject matter, overworked, and in several instances have even been accused of malpractice, thereby denying genuine help to those children who need it most.

The Crime in India Report 2022 states that over 1.6 lakh crimes are committed against children, which is more than thrice the number of crimes committed by them. Yet, limited mechanisms remain to provide redress to the victims. Social stigma, caste, or gender discrimination, fear of authority, and no documentation serve as further

impediments to vulnerable children trying to seek justice, such as street kids or domestic workers.

Justice Lokur delineates that systemic reforms are needed: to appoint legal aid counsel who are really trained in these matters; to establish child-friendly courts equipped with supportive infrastructure; and to use videoconferencing facilities so courts can reach remote areas. Beyond the courts, children require counselling, therapy, education, and social measures.

In that respect, some legal and digital measures are worthy of mention—the "Support Person" mechanism under the POCSO Act, the National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO), the Track Child portal, and the child-related schemes of NALSA. Mission Vatsalya, since 2021-22, has been an integrative approach consisting of child protection services, adoption system, and digital tools, with monitoring provided at every administrative level.

Still, the greatest laws falter with lazy implementation like low conviction rate in POSCO cases, unregulated child care institutions, etc. Justice Lokur propounds an intersectional, rights-based approach that looks at children, not merely as victims, but as active rights-holders. The involvement of the grassroots sector, including Anganwadi workers, civil society,

and community-based programs, is crucial to bridging gaps between legal institutions and children facing distress.

Justice for children in India cannot be attained solely by reforms within the courtroom. It needs political will, coordinated governance, and that persistence of commitment for the dignity, voice, and future of every child.

# DISCIPLINE OR DEATH? TRAGIC DEMISE OF 12-YEAR- OLD SPARKS OUTRAGE IN PAKISTAN

POORNA MISHRA



An age-old saying on how to properly discipline children has been, “Spare the rod, spoil the child.” This is based on the assumption that if children are not properly disciplined, then they will be ruined.

Corporal punishment is the intentional infliction of physical pain, which includes actions like caning, slapping, etc. This kind of punishment is usually given to children at home or in school in order to discipline specious "unruly kids." The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment was developed by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comment 8 issued in 2006. The definition of corporal punishment, as stated by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, is: "Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light." Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) requires that State parties protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence. However, notwithstanding all these legal provisions, the notion of corporal punishment remains ingrained in parenting styles.

The recent example from Jamrud in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, gave rise

to a scenario of a 12-year-old boy who died due to corporal punishment inflicted upon him during the assembly session in his school. It can be observed that the very old system of punishing children to change their behavior still exists. UNICEF, in its statement, condemned this act in the strongest terms and stressed that schools must be a safe place for children.

In Pakistan, certain legal provisions on this subject do exist. For example, the Child Protection and Welfare Act 2010, strictly disallows the use of corporal punishment; however, the implementation of this law is said to be sporadic at best. Corporal punishment is an offence punishable by up to six months in prison, a Rs 50,000 fine, or both, under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Act 2010 and 2018 regulations. Section 89 of the Pakistan Penal Code is misused to justify violence by justifying actions done in 'good faith' in cases of children below 12 years. Similar instances were reported in June 2020, wherein another eight-year-old girl working as a maid in Islamabad, was beaten to death by her employers for letting their pet parrots escape. In an even more recent news from Pakistan, a young student was beaten to death by his



Madrasa teacher.

In India, Section 17 of the Right to Education Act, 2009, provides for an absolute bar on corporal punishment and Section 23 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 also provides for punishment for any assault caused to a juvenile.

Corporal punishment will continue to exist unless there first comes a psychological reform in the minds of people, where the generational traumatic cycle comes to a closure with them. It is also essential to enforce stricter laws with regard to this issue. Parents, guardians, and schools should be educated and made aware of the psychological issues faced by a child due to corporal punishment.

# "FROM INDIA@2047 TO GROUND ZERO: LESSONS FROM PIPLODI'S FALLEN SCHOOL"

ISHIKA BHATTACHARYYA

In Piplodi, Rajasthan on 25 July 2025, the India@2047 visions got their roof torn off literally, when a classroom collapsed, burying children under its rubble, killing seven students and injuring more than two dozen. Is there a possibility of a mismatch between what we aspire to and what is actually the reality? The Indian express provided a haunting answer: In what world can dreams and ambitions of grandness of India@2047 collide with the reality of the deaths of children in a collapsing classroom? All the sadness and grief cannot construct safe schools and that does not bring justice

The more outrageous thing is that the tragedy is not an isolated case involving Piplodi. The education department of Rajasthan had guidelines issued widely on maintenance to the districts at the peak of monsoons. Tragically, in 11 days prior to the collapse on 14 July, 2,000 schools were to be repaired through 200 crores investment, but since administration failed to heed, delay or bureaucratic red tape, so was the case with the school that collapsed. A survey of the whole state soon showed a still more dismal state of affairs: 5,500 government schools, fully 9 percent of those examined were in such a state of decay as to be in dire need of rebuilding.

This then has been a two-pronged tragedy- children dying because of poor infrastructure; the other being a perennial bureaucratic paralysis. The union government instructed each State and Union Territory in the aftermath to perform safety audits of schools to evaluate structural integrity, fire safety, emergency protocols, and psychosocial preparedness in responding to a crisis, in each school. Another intervention came in the form of the National Human Rights Commission which sent notices to the Chief Secretary of Rajasthan and local police asking them to submit a factual report on claims that warnings of locals were not heard

From a law student's perspective one thing is obvious: moral outrage has to be made to convert itself into appropriate legal remediation. Already, the Rajasthan High Court has taken a Suo moto cognizance, widening the investigation to explore systemic breakdowns- schools that lack electricity, clean drinking water or functional toilets. There needs to be legal responsibility: lapses by those in charge cannot go uncharged, suspended, but charged criminally under the IPC with, say Section 304 A (causing death by negligence), departmental and civil liability.



Unless statutory obligations, resource allocation, and ground compliance are blended on the ground, condolences would sound to be empty rhetorics. As The Indian Express cautioned, India cannot afford to be truly developed without safe classrooms- not as a mere construction project, but as a positive legal obligation that has strict vigilance enforced.

# BEYOND THE SCREEN: HOW INDONESIA IS SHIELDING ITS YOUNGEST CITIZENS FROM DIGITAL THREATS

SUSHANT MISHRA



For tens of millions of children across Indonesia, the glow of a smartphone screen is a portal to a universe of learning, connection, and entertainment. But this portal has another side, a dark side, a realm of cyberbullying, data exploitation, and exposure to toxic content that has threatened the nation's youngest and most vulnerable. The Indonesian government enacted a landmark child protection regulation, a powerful new rulebook designed to transform the internet into a safer space for children. The need for this action was undeniable. As Indonesian children embraced the digital world faster than almost any other demographic, watchdog groups like the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) raised alarms. Their report mentioned Algorithms pushing violent and extremist content, normalization of cyberbullying, increasing threat of online predators and much more. The message was clear; hoping that tech companies would police themselves was a failed experiment. Regulation fundamentally shifts the burden of responsibility from the user to the provider. It tells social media platforms, gaming companies, and all other Electronic System Providers (ESPs) that profiting from the Indonesian market now comes with a non-negotiable duty of

care.

The regulation includes: Configure default privacy settings at a high level for products or services used by or accessible to children. The regulation mandates effective age-verification. Zero Tolerance against content like child abuse material, content promoting self-harm, eating disorders, gambling, radicalism, and cyberbullying.

Indonesia's regulation is more than just a regulation; it's a cultural statement; as it declares that a child's right to safety extends beyond the physical realm, even to the digital realm. With this initiative Indonesia joins a global chorus of nations, from India to the EU, that are demanding a safer, more ethical digital world.

# GLOBAL CHILDREN'S RIGHTS DETERIORATE AMIDST ALARMING SURGE IN MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

AKSHAT PRAKSH



The KidsRights Index is the world's first and only annual global ranking that assesses how well countries uphold children's rights. The Index in its 13th report in 2025 after evaluating 194 countries based on compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, revealed a worsening global crisis in children's rights, with mental health concerns among adolescents reaching alarming levels. Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, and Germany came at the top, while Afghanistan, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic at the bottom. Globally, over 14% of children and adolescents aged 10-19 face mental health challenges, which is worsened by insufficient safeguards in digital environments like social media. In India, rural communities face unique challenges, with a National Library of Medicine study indicating that 63.8% of rural adults perceive high stigma around mental illnesses, leading to reluctance to seek help. This stigma compounds risks from unregulated digital spaces, where cyberbullying and problematic social media use harm children's mental health. India's draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, requiring verifiable parental consent for processing children's data, aim to enhance online safety. However, the Kids Rights Index cautions that blanket social media bans, like Australia's recent restriction for those under 16, may violate children's

rights to information, privacy, and education, potentially causing social isolation and worsening mental health. The report advocates for balanced regulations to protect children without curtailing their rights. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its 2024 Concluding Observations, urged 16 of 19 reviewed countries to strengthen mental health services and suicide prevention. Yet, data gaps persist, with only Mongolia providing substantive mental health data via the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys as of April 2025.

Globally, suicide ranks as the third leading cause of death among 15-29 year-olds, with underreporting due to stigma and inadequate data systems. In India, suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among late adolescents (15-19 years), with the NCRB 2021 report recording 10,730 adolescent suicides (below 18 years), mental health conditions being a major risk factor.

The KidsRights Index calls for child rights impact assessments for digital platforms and transparent algorithms prioritizing child welfare. With climate change further impacting children's lives, the report previews efforts to integrate this factor into future indices, urging governments to adopt holistic strategies to safeguard children's mental health and rights.



# U.S. CRITICIZES UNICEF BOARD DECISIONS, URGES FOCUS ON CORE MISSION

REYANSH THAKUR

At the 2025 UNICEF Executive Board Session, the United States has expressed a strong disappointment with the agency's recent direction, warning that its growing emphasis on climate change, gender identity, and some diversity policies risks diverting attention from its main mission: "protecting vulnerable children". While reaffirming its commitment to UNICEF's humanitarian goals, the United States' delegation called for a return to the basics - prioritizing essential services like healthcare, nutrition, education, and emergency relief.

Central to the U.S. concerns was UNICEF's language around gender, with the delegation reaffirming strongly, a biologically rooted definition and rejecting the broader gender identity frameworks. The United States has also criticized the incorporation of what it calls an "ideological" content, particularly related to the sexual and reproductive rights, arguing that such matters should definitely remain within the sovereign control of the individual governments.

Cautioning against the overreach by global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals, the U.S. has called for greater respect for national priorities and values.

While no funding cuts were announced, the statement has sent a clear and strong message: UNICEF must realign with its founding purpose or risk straining ties with one of its very important supporters.

As UNICEF continues balancing inclusive global advocacy with practical humanitarian work, the U.S. stance has highlighted the growing tensions over what the agency's future priorities should be, and who gets to define them.



# A PROMISE OF IDENTITY: HOW ASIA-PACIFIC AIMS TO REGISTER EVERY BIRTH AND DEATH BY 2030

KASHISH RATHORE



The Third Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific held from 24 to 26 June, at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok, Thailand which is considered as remarkable gathering as Asia Pacific Nations made history by committing to register every single birth and death across the region by 2030 which is a pledge that is as much about numbers as it is about leaving no one invisible. Countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Mongolia, Nauru, Nepal, Fiji, Vietnam, the Philippines and Vanuatu and many others along with the representation from civil societies, academia, UN agencies (like UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNHCR) and development partners such as Bloomberg Philanthropies, the CDC Foundation, and the World Bank, took actively participated in this conference. The main purpose of the conference was to mark the achievements of the Asia- Pacific CRVS Decade (2015-2024), evaluate progress, identify existing gaps, and renew the region's commitment to the ambitious goal.

Birth and death certificates are very important for a child as they open doors for getting education, healthcare, legal rights, inheritance and social protection and protect against child trafficking and early marriage. The conference declaration took inspiration from the Sustainable development goals as it

provides identity for including birth registration by 2030 (SDG 16.9). The “2025 Report on Progress: Getting everyone in the Picture” provided that over the past decade, statistics are compelling as the number of unregistered children under five declined from 135 million to 51 million which resulted in a 60% drop. Currently around 29 countries brag more than 90% of births registered within a year, and the same happened for the death registration in 30 countries. Still challenges exist as around 14 million babies go unregistered every year and around 6.9 million deaths are also unregistered every year often in hard-to-reach communities.

This declaration goes beyond by calling for a robust, inclusive yet digitally empowered CRVS system which can handle crises and last till last citizen, especially to vulnerable classes. The CRVS system is the system that is administered by the government and records vital events like births, deaths, marriages and fetal deaths as required by law. The promise that took place is that no life in the Asia-Pacific should begin or end without recognition by 2030. Universal registration ensures that each and every life counts and countries must act compassionately and innovate so no birth or death goes unrecorded by 2030.

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